

THE *Final Straw*

A WEEKLY ANARCHIST SHOW

The Final Straw is a weekly anarchist and anti-authoritarian radio show bringing you voices and ideas from struggle around the world. Since 2010, we've been broadcasting from occupied Tsalagi land in Southern Appalachia (Asheville, NC).

We also frequently feature commentary (serious and humorous) by anarchist prisoner, Sean Swain.

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A RUSSIAN ANARCHIST AGAINST THE UKRAINE WAR

The Final Straw Radio
March 13, 2022



ing. We see that many people actually subscribe. It seems that the format is convenient for the audience. We're quite proud of it actually.

TFSR: I see that some of the notes from those are getting translated. I imagine if someone does have those language skills also and wants to contribute offering to do translations of some of the stuff published on the site might be helpful?

Petr: That would be great. CrimethInc. actually, did some translation on their own initiative. But we definitely need translators, so if someone feels they have these skills, they're definitely welcome to contact us by any means possible.

TFSR: It's been a pleasure speaking with you and thank you again for taking the time and for all the work that you're doing.

Petr: Thanks for having me and hope that the war will be stopped.

TFSR: And then the states.

This week, we spoke with Petr, a Russian anarchist member of the group Autonomous Action, who is living in Europe right now. For the hour we speak about the invasion of Ukraine, a bit about the resistance inside of Russia to the war drums and the Putin regime, the dangers of a nuclear conflict, the impacts of increased sanctions and anarchists organizing across the borders of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus against the war and against tyranny. You can learn more about what's going on by visiting **Avtonom.org** and finding the English tab, or using tools like google translate to read articles from the Russian there.

Search for this interview title at **<https://thefinalstrawradio.noblogs.org/>** to find links to further resources on this topic, featured music, cryptocurrency addresses, the audio version, and files for printing copies of this episode.

TFSR: Would you please introduce yourself with whatever name, location, preferred gender pronouns, or affiliations that you can give us?

Petr: My name is Petr. I'm located in Europe, I would prefer not to disclose the particular location. I associate myself with he/him.

TFSR: Cool. Are there any projects that you're involved with for the sake of this conversation?

Petr: I guess, the most important for this conversation is that I participate quite heavily in what the Autonomous Action is doing. This is one of the largest or maybe even the largest organizations of anarchist, libertarian communists in the ex-USSR countries. I've been involved in Autonomous Action quite a lot before I moved to Europe. I am still involved while being here. There are lots of projects going on. But mostly, spreading information, organizing more or less a stream of anarchist views, anarchist analysis of the current events for as wide an audience in Russia and neighboring countries as possible.

TFSR: I'm familiar with avtonom.org as a website where I can occasionally find English translations, updates of stuff, and ideas going on in the Russian language sphere. Would you share a little bit about the history of that group Autonomous Action more widely, the shared values and beliefs, like you said, that most people identify as anarchist or libertarian communists? Where the members are? What stuff do the projects do?

Petr: The Autonomous Action was established quite a long time ago, 20 years ago, in fact, in 2002-2003. It used to be an organization with quite solid, libertarian communist and anarcho-communist platform, based essentially on Kropotkin, Bakunin, and Bookchin. But it was not very picky, meaning that we cooperated with all sorts of the progressive left, but still, our opposition towards the state and towards the statist left was quite pronounced always, all the time. During the first 15 years of its existence, Autonomous Action was quite active on the streets. We really organized hundreds of various street actions. We also were quite integrated with the Antifa movement in Russia, I think the Autonomous Action was a major player in the anti-fascist movement on the streets. But then in recent years, since the state repression is constantly increasing, it becomes more

TFSR: Yeah. Is there anything that I failed to ask about that you want to talk about?

Petr: I guess we covered all the important topics. The only thing is probably that in the current situation, it's quite important not to fall victim to propaganda from both sides. Both from the Russian side, and from the Ukrainian and broadly, the general Western side. Unfortunately, we sometimes see in the Western media some anti-Russian vibe, which is probably understandable in times of war. But at the same time, it's quite dangerous, I think. As I've said, it's really important to always separate the actions of the Russian government, which Russian people didn't elect, to begin with, and the actions or the opinions of those who actually live in Russia, and who suffer from the actions of the Russian government. The Kremlin does not occupy just Ukraine, it actually occupies Russia as well. I think that is an important thing to remind people about.

TFSR: Absolutely. Petr, how can people follow your work and the work of Autonomous Action?

Petr: We have a website avtonom.org and it has an English section. We don't have enough resources to translate all the materials into English but we try to translate at least the most important ones. You can also find the links to our social media there. We have all sorts of channels that you can expect, Facebook, Twitter, Telegram, even Instagram. You can follow us on whatever channel you prefer.

TFSR: VK?

Petr: VK, you mean this Russian social network VKontakte? Yes, we have a page there. But we do not recommend using it. It's owned by the Russian state. Don't use VK.

TFSR: If listeners do speak Russian, or besides the written content on the website and on social media, you've also got a podcast on Sound Cloud, right? But it's in Russian.

Petr: Yes, it's in Russian, it's weekly. People definitely can subscribe to it on YouTube, Sound Cloud, or whatever, or just listen to it from our website. We are trying to give a weekly anarchist analysis of what is happen-

this. Most Russians just don't care a lot about Kazakhstan in general. It's difficult for me to give any clear estimate about this.

About Belarus, the Russian society was polarized by the riots and protests in Belarus. Those who were more conservative have this nostalgic feeling about Belarus reminding them about Soviet times. They believed that these were protests inspired by the West, which is poised to destroy this island of the Soviet Union. They definitely were against the protests and they supported Lukashenko. Other parts of the society, more liberal, were unilaterally against Lukashenko and they supported the protests by whatever means possible. It's very polarized.

TFSR: Do you have any words for comrades internationally or who are in Ukraine, who might hear this? How can anarchists abroad support the efforts of dissidents within Russia, and everyone living under the Putin regime who are resisting?

Petr: We are in contact with our comrades in Ukraine. It's not like we are disconnected, there is a constant flow of information from here to there, and from there to here.

But anyway, the main words that we can send them is that they are fighting not just for themselves, or for Ukraine, they are fighting for Russia as well, because we really believe that, as it happened a lot in historical times, a lost war often meant the fall of the regime in Russia. We definitely believe this will be another case of that. Stay strong. Defeat Putin. We in Russia, or internationally, will help you to do this as much as possible.

About the question how can anarchists abroad support the efforts of dissidents in Russia? The best way to do this is to spread the information, spread the word that it's not the case that the entire Russian population supports this war. There are dozens of thousands of people on the streets, thousands of those who are arrested. There are political organizations or groups, even if not that large, but still dozens of people who are actively working against war and organizing protests, meaning designing and printing leaflets, starting websites or groups in social media, etc. All of this is extremely important. If you want to support people with something else, not just with the word, we have several cryptocurrency wallets [linked in episode post]. If someone wants to give money to printing leaflets, paying for websites, for the fees which our comrades have after being arrested in street protests, please do. We will be grateful for that.

and more difficult to actually organize something on the streets openly by anarchists, which means that we are increasingly trying to become a stream of information. That's why we nowadays don't call ourselves an organization anymore, but a media project. We're on our website. We're on all sorts of social media networks. Those members of Autonomous Action who are still in Russia — and most of them are — participate in street protests and grassroots initiatives, from environmental to political stuff, like the current anti-war protests.

TFSR: You've mentioned that you're in Europe right now. But I wonder if you have a sense, at least among Russian anarchists and Russian-speaking anarchists that you're in contact with, what are the reactions to the escalation that the Russian government's been building, but in particular, the invasion of Ukraine, and the justifications behind it? We've heard of several marches around Russia with many arrests and beatings, as well.

Petr: It probably will come as no surprise that all the anarchist organizations or movements or projects that I know about in Russia pronounced quite explicitly their position against this war and against Putin's regime which started this war, and I guess for us as anarchists, it didn't come as much as a surprise as, for example, for liberals. We were not surprised that Putin will start another war. Wars accompany capitalism, always. Even more, they accompany capitalism in this flavor, which we observe in Russia, this strange mix of neoliberalism, authoritarian regime, and patriarchal propaganda for the crowds. We were not much surprised. But we were a bit surprised by the scale of it. Nobody seriously believed that Putin would really decide to occupy or at least try to occupy the whole of Ukraine. Our guess was that only the Eastern and maybe some southern parts will be under attack. The scale was surprising, but not the war itself.

There were lots of protests around the country. The protests are still ongoing. People still go out in the streets every day. Anarchists, participated quite a lot in these protests. But the protest is quite disorganized. Because, as I've said, it's really difficult to really organize a real demo in Russia, because, it's just those who will call people to come to some particular place and time will be probably arrested long before it started. It's really just the spontaneous organization of people via social media, etc. But still, indeed, in the first days of the war, some groups of anarchists in Moscow, for example, and then in St. Petersburg as well, did manage to

gather in crowds with banners and with anarchist slogans, etc. But most of the times anarchists were just part of the crowd without any banners or flags because if you have a banner, or if you have a flag, you will be just the first one to be arrested, of course. But the attitude of all anarchists in Russia is anti-war and anti-Putin.

TFSR: From what I hear in the Western media, the Russian government has criminalized media outlets and organizations that call this an invasion or a war. Do you have the impression of if the population in Russia knows what's going on with the battles, with the shelling of cities, and the refugee crisis that's building? Do you get the impression that this will be the new Chechnya to bring the country together into Putin's arms?

Petr: That's true. Indeed, in the best spirit of George Orwell, the Russian government criminalized calling this war a war. Officially, it is a special military operation. Indeed, even for carrying, for example, a sheet of paper with the words 'NO WAR' in it, you can get a fine, you will be penalized. If you do it for the second time, at least in theory, you can get a prison sentence, which is a significant step towards— Putin's regime was being harder on anyone who has been protesting all the recent years. But this is a really strong step, even for Putin's regime. Because it's especially ironic, given that the state propaganda all these years was based essentially on this memory of World War II, and on declarations that "we are peaceful people, and we don't want war", etc. This is the reason why Putin and the authorities decided to ban the word "war" because otherwise, it would sound too crazy for the majority of the Russian population.

The question about whether the population knows what's going on. It is a difficult question. It's a difficult issue. The urbanized population, which was critical towards Putin even before the war, more or less have the means of accessing Western media, accessing some remaining independent Russian media, they know how to use TOR, VPNs to access blocked websites, so they definitely know what's going on. About the rest of the population, I'd say that the majority understands what's going on because nobody really believes the authorities that bombings are aimed only at military facilities, etc because nobody believes Russian authorities in anything. The trust in the government is really low. But it's just the case that it's difficult to leave with a feeling that you are a citizen of an aggressor country because the historical memory of people in Russia is that the

TFSR: How have Russians and anarchists in particular reacted to the recent military interventions in Kazakhstan and the backing of the Belarus dictatorship?

Petr: Here the answer is simple, we definitely stood in solidarity with the Belarusian protests. Lots of our comrades, anarchists from Belarus participated in these protests, lots of them are jailed for this, some of them for really long sentences. We supported them and lots of Russian anarchists actually went to Belarus to participate in these protests. The events in Kazakhstan are more complicated, meaning that there is still some fog of war there, it's still not entirely clear what happened in Kazakhstan. Was it a military coup d'état or was it a folk revolution? Was it something else? I guess we're still trying to find out. But we definitely supported the protests in the western parts of the country against gas prices increasing. We definitely tried to resist, to protest against sending Russian troops to Kazakhstan. Because this is all parts of the same chain, sending troops to Ukraine, sending troops to Kazakhstan is part of this empire politics by Putin, by the Russian state. It looks at Kazakhstan and Ukraine and Belarus as its sphere of influence, which they should rule. We as anarchists may surely oppose this way of thinking, in general. We do not think that any empire has the right to tell the people what to do.

TFSR: Do you get much of a sense of Russian sentiments from the wider population about those two interventions or are they kind of hard to gauge?

Petr: In Belarus, there was no military intervention. Russian troops did not enter Belarus, or at least officially didn't enter. Russia helped the Belarusian dictatorship only with money, lots of money. They also sent some TV propagandists, media managers to help the Belarusian propaganda. There was no clear military intervention, although, Russian troops, are now in Belarus, and they actually attacked Ukraine from the territory of Belarus. But that's just because they signed lots of agreements. Putin and Lukashenko are best friends now. That's happening all the time, but there was no intervention.

The general opinion of the Russian public about Kazakhstan, people just didn't have enough time to actually understand what's happening. It happened in 10 days, or even less. I don't think that there is any sentiment, which is shared by a large part of the Russian population about

about sanctions. I don't have any clear answer, whether they're beneficial or not, but definitely, people will suffer. They're suffering already.

TFSR: Do you think that anti-state, anti-capitalist, libertarian leftists, and anarchists are poised to make good use of the momentum against the war and the increased pressure within Russia to bring about some change? Even if it starts from a small place, including the anti-militarist, anti-draft sentiments?

Petr: The short answer is that I would like to believe it. The long answer is that, as I've said, there were literally two decades of destroying the protest landscape, including anarchists. There are very few anarchist or libertarian left organizations that are still capable of actually organizing something massive or mobilizing significant numbers of people.

Having said that, I still think that the current situation is somewhat promising. It's bad, but it's there is some silver lining in this cloud. Because lots of people, including those from the anarchist movement, actually think that based on what we see now, the Russian Federation, as we know it, probably will not survive in the next several months or years. Because, indeed, the economic situation is quite tough now and it's really catastrophic, because of the sanctions and because of the war, war is an expensive business as well. Also because of purely political things, as I've said, Putin probably planned to finish this war very quickly, in a couple of days. But he failed in this. And within the circles of his friends and henchmen and military generals, top hats, etc...they do not do it very much when someone fails. It's not something tolerated. We expect definitely that the power struggles at the top of the Kremlin chair will intensify. Probably, the regime will somehow collapse in this or that way, comparatively soon, we cannot announce any particular date, but there is this feeling.

In this situation, we probably have good chances to establish or at least help to establish something more decentralized and more libertarian on the ruins of this collapsed regime. It's still a good question to what extent we'll be able to do anything meaningful. But at least nowadays, we're trying to spread the word, spread the libertarian and anarchist ideas, and trying to push gently these anti-war vibes, anti-war protests into a more anti-authoritarian channel. To explain to people that to stop the war, it's not enough to simply get the troops back, you also have to remove Putin from the Kremlin. We also need to make sure that no second Putin arrives there. I'd say that we can make good use of this moment, we have to try.

Soviet Union was under an attack by Nazi Germany. There is this whole myth about a brave country defending itself from the aggressors, and now Russia is this aggressor. I guess many people just try to close their eyes and forget about this. They happily catch on any piece of propaganda on the TV or the Internet, which says "It's the Ukrainians who are bombing themselves, or we are freeing Ukraine from the Nazis" or that Ukraine was developing biological weapons to destroy all Russians. This is a real claim by the Russian military. It becomes crazier. I think still, people often try to believe that, just because it's difficult to see the reality often, unfortunately. I think that the role of anarchists and other progressive political movements is to try to open people's eyes.

The next question of yours, whether this will be the new Chechnya, the idea of Putin definitely was that it will be a quick victory, which would improve the political situation inside the country because people when the wars are won by an authoritarian leader. But now that there is no quick victory — two weeks have passed, and no significant military success up to now — unfortunately, it seems that it could be the new Chechnya in the meaning that it will be just senseless bloodshed for many months or years, which will be horrible. This is definitely a very grim perspective and future. We should do everything that we can to avoid this. We probably can talk later about what we are doing for this and what anarchists and other progressive left can do for this.

TFSR: Thank you.

The claim about the chemical weapons development is kind of a newer one that I've just seen popping up over the last few days. Can you describe what that claim is that's being made by the Russian military?

Petr: Essentially, they invent a new reason to invade Ukraine every day. And at some point, they claimed that they found some documents with the names of some chemical substances, somewhere in Ukraine, in the conquered cities, and based on this, they stated that Ukraine, with the help of the US and NATO, was developing biological weapons to target Russian people. They even claimed something that this weapon will be specifically aimed at the Russian DNA, which is absolute nonsense from the scientific point of view. But it's just the case that we've observed this for many years that Putin and Kremlin propaganda, just their strategy was always just "say as many crazy things as possible so that the truth is just

drowning in the sea of shit essentially”. They don’t care about whether what they claim is consistent because one day they say that we invaded Ukraine because we want to defend the people of the East of Ukraine. The next day they say that we invaded Ukraine because it wanted to become a member of NATO, the next day, they say that it was because of nuclear weapon which was being developed there. It’s just a constant stream of nonsense, which nobody actually believes in Russia, except maybe some hardcore patriots, which are definitely the minority of the population.

TFSR: I also wonder, since we’re going back into reasons for the invasion that have been given... The de-nazification makes sense with what you said about the Russian government playing off— The massive amount of people that died during World War II fighting the Nazis, but talking about this as an extension of the Patriotic War for the Fatherland. The de-nazification — and we know that there are militias that are connected to or integrated into the Ukrainian military that have white supremacist connections or have indeed Nazis within their ranks — I’ve been hearing some other anarchist sources talk about okay, “ there’s Nazis involved in the military of Ukraine. There are Nazis involved in the military of the US. There are Nazis involved in the military alongside Russian troops.” One group, for instance, that’s been mentioned, is the Wagner group? Can you talk a little bit about it, just to even the playing field and to point out that states are bad and Nazis using state militaries? Can you talk a little bit about some of the Nazi groups that are involved in the Russian military?

Petr: Well, the whole business of this de-nazification is of course total bullshit. It doesn’t have anything to do with reality. Of course, there are Nazis in Ukraine, and of course, they are some militias that are somehow associated with the Ukrainian army. But it’s definitely not the real aim of invading Ukraine. Putin doesn’t care at all about Nazis, what he cares about is whether he can order these people or not. Definitely, Nazi mercenaries are fighting on the side of the Russian Army. They were involved in armed conflicts in the east of Ukraine, they were involved in Syria, in many other regions of the world. But actually, it doesn’t matter much that they’re Nazis. They’re much more just soldiers of Putin than Nazis. Because the Nazi groups in Russia have been mostly eliminated or totally subjected to the state about 8-10 years ago. Nowadays, there are no independent Nazi parties or groups that are active on the streets. They

to essentially just tell its head, which is Putin, whatever Putin wants. In this configuration, there is not much resistance to possibly pressing this nuclear button. I think that the danger is real, unfortunately.

TFSR: There’s been a lot of talks of NATO states avoiding sending troops so as not to escalate in that way, but sending weapons instead and imposing further sanctions on the Russian economy, including the ending of purchases of oil, or the capping or slowing of those purchases, which is a major part of the Russian economy, the exporting of petroleum products. How does this affect regular people inside of Russia? How much do you think that it actually affects the rich and the bureaucrats directly?

Petr: It definitely affects regular people. Exchange rates just increased twice or three times over a couple of days, which means that essentially people lost half of their salaries. There are already lots of problems with the goods in the shops, with logistic chains, etc. It’s really a large, profound systemic effect on the Russian economy, even if some people do not yet see it immediately, but it’s definitely there. It definitely will affect regular people a lot. They will become much poorer than they were before that.

How does it affect the rich and the elite class? That’s a good question. It definitely affects them to some extent. We see all these boats being captured all around the world, and we see assets, frozen, etc. The businesses that they own also suffer because of all these sanctions. It’s difficult to estimate whom it affects more, the regular people or the rich. I don’t even know how it can be measured. All I can say is that it definitely influences people.

Some of the sanctions, I guess, make sense in terms of stopping this Putinist military machine and essentially, just slowing down the military part of the economy. But other sanctions, for example, this Visa and MasterCard payment systems blocking transactions of Russians abroad, essentially prohibiting them to use payment cards issued by Russian banks abroad. This makes sense maybe from the pure ethical point of view, but from the point of view of at least allowing people to flee the country and then use their money abroad, this is not that good. I know many people who fled the country because they were some anti-Putin activists, but then their payment cards were blocked, and they essentially were left abroad without any money at all. There are very contradictory opinions

government has chosen now. If we can't win by conventional weapons, then let's just bomb them. Because I guess they use more or less the same tactics in Syria and Chechnya. It seems to them that it brings them victory. Why shouldn't it be used here in Ukraine? Of course, Ukraine is a bit different, because it still has its military, more or less, well, not intact, but still in an operational state. Also, unfortunately, the world didn't pay so much attention to cities being bombed in Syria, the world does pay a lot of attention to cities being bombed in Ukraine. From this point of view, I'm not sure that these tactics will be actually profitable for the Russian army. But they certainly starting to do something that, they're bombing more and more civilian buildings, residential buildings, etc. Unfortunately, that's definitely the case.

TFSR: The last few decades, since the end of the Cold War, and since the end of the Soviet Union have brought a few shifts and changes in international arms treaties. I know, in the last six years, the US has stepped aside from anti-nuclear proliferation treaties that included Russia, as a signatory, and now there's a lot of concerns that if NATO or US (as a more active element within NATO) decided to escalate participation, or actually start participating on the ground that it could spark a nuclear war. Do you have a sense of people seeing that in Russia as a possibility? How do you feel about that?

Petr: People in Russia definitely do see this as a possibility, especially because Putin himself mentioned that in his speech, when he actually announced the start of the war, he mentioned that we have nuclear power, etc. Also, many people, especially those who are older still remember the Soviet times when the expectation of nuclear war was more or less permanent. It's not something entirely new.

I'd say that many people that I know at least, definitely are afraid of this. Also, there is a lot of evidence that Putin is not entirely in his mind. He definitely has some mental problems, which means that probably there is not much to prevent him from starting a nuclear war if a demon in his head tells him to do so. Or angels? I don't know what he has in his head. People are definitely afraid of this, they hope that these are still just hollow threats. But you might never know. I personally think that we should be afraid of this, that, indeed, the Russian nuclear power is now in the hands of, first of all, a person who is definitely a bit mentally unhealthy, second of all, his state apparatus, which is fine-tuned to obey its head and

are either dead or in prison, or they are part of more or less pro-Putin, pro-regime movements. Nazis are not political players anymore in Russia at all. It doesn't make sense to even to talk about them. Maybe if you have some, specific questions, I probably can give some answers, but they do not play any significant part in what's happening in Russia now.

TFSR: Okay, that makes sense. I've heard Russian people describe that Nazis aren't fighting you on the streets. But when you get pulled into a police station, there's going to be a Nazi with a boot to beat you. It seems like one thing about the way that Putin's regime operates is to destroy autonomous power that could exist, anything that could destabilize and integrate it into their own power base, which is why it's hard for Western people sometimes to take a read on Putin's politics, because they presume it's left or it's right or something like that when actually it's just neoliberal authoritarian.

Petr: I agree. Putin doesn't care about whether this particular group is left or right, Nazi or Antifa. He cares about whether they pose a threat to him or not, that's what matters. That was the reason behind crushing the Nazi movement about 10 years ago, and actually, about the same time they started crushing the Antifa movement. Then it was more or less finished by 2014 when it was split along this conflict in the Crimea and the eastern parts of Ukraine because some part, some members of the Russian Antifa movement went to fight on the Ukrainian side, and others went to fight on the side of this newly-established so-called republics. Both sides considered themselves to be anti-fascists. That was sad to observe. But I guess that's what you expect more or less in such political conditions.

TFSR: Yeah.

Putin has made the argument that Ukraine is a part of Russia, we've talked about the claims of genocide and Russian speakers and Donbas. Just as a note, war times are a time of increased nationalism. Have you seen the idea of who is Russian changed shape recently within Russia or to your experience? Where does this leave people of Chechen or Uzbek or other backgrounds or African backgrounds who may or may not be considered as Russian as others right now? How does the race work inside of Russia, basically? Do you get the impression that this has changed around the time of the war drums beating?

Petr: This, I should admit, is a very complicated issue. It probably would require a separate interview or a separate podcast to talk about this in-depth. But in general, on the one hand, Putin and his elite would probably want to establish some ethnic Russian domination or something similar to that. But on the other hand, they understand that they rule a country, which is really multinational and multiracial and multi-ethnic, and pronouncing one ethnic group as a dominant one has its dangers. On the other hand, another thing that stops them from going full Nazi or fully nationalistic is that, I already mentioned, this myths of The Great World War and the fighting against German Nazis, and these myths, these sorts of archetype supports Putin because he and the regime as a whole always claim themselves to be the descendants of these brave Soviet warriors who fought Nazis. That's why they avoid directly discriminating against ethnic groups, or at least stating this explicitly, although, probably personally, they would these to happen. But politically, they are trying to avoid this. We have no evidence that the situation of ethnic minorities in Russia changed a lot since the war started.

There are problems, but it's not that there is any apartheid or something like that. We know that the Ukrainian citizens in Russia are now often subjected to questioning. They have visits from the police, because citizens of the country with which Russia is at war right now, even when Russia itself doesn't mean that it is in a war, up to now at least, it was just questioning. Essentially, the police come to a Ukrainian family and ask them: "Are you going to commit any terrorist acts? Do you have relatives in Ukraine?" It's relatively soft, up to now, but we closely monitor the situation. We don't know what might happen next.

TFSR: Because we've talked about the censorship that's occurring around the information getting to parts of the Russian population, do you have a sense of what the morale might be inside of the military? Can you talk a little bit about the universal military obligation or draft in Russia and who gets out of it and how they can do that?

Petr: There is a draft in Russia. Every male after turning 18 has to serve for one year in the army, except when he starts studying at the university. It's a long and venerable Russian tradition to avoid the draft. It's been like that in the Russian Empire, Soviet Union, and it's still like this in the Russian Federation. No one or almost no one wants to serve in the army. That's almost universal. That's why people try to avoid the army, by all

means possible, even before the war, by paying money to the officials, by entering the University, even if they didn't want actually to study, etc. Of course, now, when there is a real danger of being sent to a real war, even fewer people actually want to serve. Currently, Russia seems to be losing this war. There are rumors of actually announcing a total mobilization and sending all the conscripts to Ukraine, we expect that there certainly will be protests or at least conflicts concerning this. We're trying to observe this and once we noticed that anything is happening try to help the protesters, those who are trying to organize against this conscription, etc.

About the morale inside the military. It's difficult to say because we don't have any spies in the Russian army. Judging by the news, I guess, you more or less read the same news as us, it seems that the morale is not that high. Also, because as I've said, it's some a mind-blowing fact to any Russian soldier that he is now serving the role of an invader. Because all his life he was taught that his role is to defend his country against invaders. Now he's the invader. Also because no one actually wanted to really play a part in the war. All these soldiers didn't want to really risk their lives in real battle. I'd say that the morale is low. There were some rumors about soldiers rioting somewhere near the border against sending them to Ukraine. But there were no independent confirmations about this. It's still just some rumors. We definitely expect that there will be some riots, some soldiers rejecting the orders, etc.

TFSR: I guess on Telegram loops and on social media I have seen a video of captured Russian soldiers explaining why they're there. That sounds also like a terrible situation to be in. But I can't blame someone for capturing an invading soldier. Or a video of older women confronting soldiers and saying, "You should really put some sunflower seeds in your pockets so that when we kill you, at least something good will grow". I'm sure the vitriol that they're facing has done quite a deal on them when they're being told that if anything they're going to liberate people or to defend people. It makes me wonder if they're not doing so well in this facet of the war — this is speculation, but if the Russian government might decide to focus more on the aerial bombardment because it's easier to push a button and kill a bunch of people than it is to go in and face snipers who know the territory.

Petr: I guess that's more or less what everyone now agrees on. That it seems that indeed, this is the tactics that the Russian army or the Russian